

gence of the medical profession, that one of its preparations was a specific for catarrh and another a specific for epilepsy; now they have become more modest and have inserted the word "almost." We are convinced that within two months "anasarcin" (whatever that may be) will cease to be announced as "a cure for dropsy." It is most astonishing what havoc a little bit of truth will produce; just plain, ordinary truth, of the homely, garden variety. The paper by Dr. Billings has now been printed in the *Journal A. M. A.*, and in ten state journals. The journal of the association of the great state of New York was "bluffed" out of publishing the article by the foolish threat of the Etna Chemical Company, which concern perpetrates "phenalgin," one of the acetanilid mixtures. Michigan could not find space for the paper in the pages of its journal; doubtless it was thought that the paper and the advertising pages would be an "incompatible mixture."

Anything to divert attention! For quite a while your JOURNAL, and its "lean and languid" (and many other adjectives!) editor, **SILLY** have been the recipients of comment, **REPORTS.** most of it far from complimentary, in a number of the "published-for-profit" journals. That was quite to be expected, so no particular attention has been paid to it, and the circulation and distribution of foolish statements or uncomplimentary remarks has gone right along. The last story to reach our attention is quite a new thing, however; it "takes a fall out of" the entire medical profession of the state of California. It is now going the rounds of the drug journals and doubtless, in time, will reach the pages of the "medical" journals. It is to the effect that the medical profession in California is made up entirely of grafters; that the doctors all expect to and do receive commissions on their prescriptions, commissions from nurses whom they assign to patients, commissions from undertakers—in fact, commissions from anybody and everybody with whom they do business or come in contact. This is the first canard that has indicated the slightest trace of ingenuity, and as such is refreshing. We would suggest that some one with a spark of imagination be hired to make up these stories; they grow uninteresting. Keep it up, gentlemen, we can stand it as long as you can, and we can assure you that it gives *us* more pleasure than *you* can possibly derive from it. But please get some new lies.

The poor old *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* recently had an editorial weep on the subscribers' shoulder; we hope it feels **A WEAKLY(?)** better. It bewailed the great difficulty of editing a weekly (did it really mean "weakly"?) medical journal, and furnishing the proper sort of pabulum to its readers, in these strenuous days when

one man wants "practical points" and another wants "rigid research." We venture to think that the business office has fewer troubles, and that "prompt-paying advertisers" is the only subject demanding its immediate attention. We would most respectfully suggest to the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* that as the nameless "medical" journal has dropped the department edited by "Old Doc," the *B. M. and S. J.* might take it up and thus establish a place for "practical pointers," wherein its readers may be kept posted on the unlimited value of the nostrums which it advertises. Of course, there would have to be some modifications from the former style of "Old Doc," for it makes one's good red blood run cold to think of the St. Louis—"Old Doc"—English appearing in a publication edited in Boston; "Old Doc"—English would have to be translated into Bostonese. Or, for variety, and to furnish a section where all interests could find something entertaining, it might start a funny section and call it the appendix vermiciformis; this would, presumably, attract attention, even if it did not excite universal approbation. Or it might confine the matter in every other issue to articles in words of one syllable. Never mind, old lady, don't cry; in the historic words of "Poker Davis," "you're doin' the best you can." But perhaps this is undignified; horrible thought!

THE STATUS OF ORGANIZATION WORK IN CALIFORNIA.*

By J. N. McCORMACK, M. D.

Chairman of the Committee on Organization of the American Medical Association, Bowling Green, Ky.

While it is now very generally known that my work is entirely in the interest of county and state organizations, and is done wholly at the expense of the American Medical Association, and although the profession everywhere has been more enthusiastic after my visits than the merits of what was done seemed to warrant, it is not so well known that I have had to almost literally beg my way into most states, and that I am still kept out of others where the need for somebody to do something to arouse and help the profession is even more evident. Fortunately, I have been relieved of all embarrassment in the matter by the knowledge that the obstacles or objections are in no way personal to myself, to what I represent or to the Association. Most frequently the trouble is that the council and other state society officials labor under the delusion that their organizations are already so advanced that only the element of time is needed to make them complete. Often I am told that "You could use no argument and bring no influence to bear which we have not already exhausted, and we cannot think that the results would pay for the trouble to us and the expense to the Association which would be involved. Back of all these expressed difficulties is the fact that these officials are busy practitioners who are so occupied with their own affairs that they cannot, or at least do not, give much serious thought to anything else which they can postpone or avoid. Being thus relieved of all personal embarrassment, and knowing from long experience what can be accomplished if the opportunity is given, I have just patiently, kindly and tactfully persisted in my efforts

*Copy of a report sent to the American Medical Association.

to secure the necessary co-operation and to get in, and have seldom failed to find that the work was most needed in those states where the need for it was least felt.

California is an excellent illustration of what has just been said. It was the first state to adopt the new plan of organization without advice or assistance from the outside. The increase in membership has been rapid, and societies exist in all but a few sparsely settled counties. Through its ably edited STATE JOURNAL it is leading in some of the best and most fruitful reform work which is being done in this country. Its Secretary and editor, Dr. Jones, in a most altruistic and unselfish way, has given up every other interest and ambition in order to devote his entire time and talents to its work. It has a fair medical law, and the standard of examinations is high. The fees for medical men are higher than in almost any other state in the Union. This is far more than had been accomplished in most states—more than has been done in my own state in several lines, and a pride in it all is natural and easy to understand. Still, from a careful study of their legislative history, of the dominion and insolence of the quack interests in the state, and other unmistakable symptoms, I became convinced that their attractive looking organization was largely on the surface, and that the unusual prosperity of their profession was not only fortuitous and insecure, but was endangered by the same influences which have operated so disastrously for years in the East and Middle states.

When I took the matter up with Dr. Jones he insisted that their organization was complete except in a few sparsely settled outlying counties, and no impression was made when it was urged that far more good could be done, and that there was the greatest need for work in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento and other centers of population than in the country districts, and that his plans could not be considered even well under way until these centers were thoroughly infected with the modern spirit of professional co-operation. When we met at Portland, after fruitless correspondence, I was not surprised to find that we had been discussing entirely different propositions. Earnest and able worker as he was, and is, he had believed that his profession was organized as soon as a large majority of them were enrolled in the membership, with a good attendance and an interesting program at the annual meetings of the State Society, and a strong journal for intercommunication and instruction. When he realized that, important and necessary as these things are as links in the complete chain proposed under the new system, they are secondary to and almost entirely dependent for real effectiveness upon the county societies, and that these, meeting weekly or oftener, should and can be made live local schools for working out all of the complex problems confronting a rapidly evolving profession, including post graduate work, practical business methods and for educating and leading public opinion along proper lines as to the reasons for and methods of securing and enforcing medical and health legislation, he was more anxious for the work to be undertaken than I had been, and at the end of the itinerary exacted a promise that I would return next year for at least six weeks' work of the same kind.

As first arranged, the itinerary included Sacramento, Oakland, Santa Rosa, San Jose, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Los Angeles and San Diego. Later Pasadena and Long Beach were added. Dr. Jones attended all of the appointments with me except those at Santa Rosa and San Luis Obispo, and it soon developed that he had made systematic arrangements to secure the fullest possible representation at all of the meetings. At Sacramento, the first meeting, as the attendance was pretty full, and as I had the privilege of meeting many of the members in advance, op-

portunity was given for a careful study of local conditions. The personnel was markedly high, especially on the social side, but their county society was of the old perfunctory kind, and although at the beautiful and historic capital of the state, where the need for a live interest in public affairs and for concert of action was so great, they had never even grasped the idea of such an organization or of uniting and wielding the powerful influence of the profession in everything for the promotion of its own and the public welfare. For instance, Governor Pardee, a physician, and a member of the county society since his removal to the Capitol, had been forced to veto an anti-vaccination bill during the last session of the General Assembly, which he believed could have been easily defeated with a little effort by the local profession. Other instances were related where prominent members had failed or declined to explain important measures to legislators who were patrons or personal friends. On the whole, I got the impression that this excellent profession more than usually harmonious and prosperous, and located at a point of the greatest advantage and importance, was practically dead to everything not entirely personal.

My opportunities for forming an opinion were more limited as to San Francisco and Oakland, in many respects one profession. While their societies attempt little except the reading and discussion of papers and the old order of routine work, so far as could be learned, they were somewhat more progressive than the one at Sacramento. No systematic effort had been made to deal with quackery and other similar problems, and the society appeared to be drifting along in the direction of least possible resistance, although made up of a profession able to guide with a master hand if aroused to the importance of doing so. The society at Santa Rosa was new and enthusiastic, that at San Jose solid and conservative, with delightful personal and social relations. Although adjoining one of the great army posts, with every facility and incentive for clinics and scientific work, the society at Monterey was weak and dormant, and things were not materially different at San Luis Obispo.

We had more time again at Los Angeles, and looked into local conditions carefully. Owing largely to the personal efforts of an active and capable President, Dr. Joseph M. King, this society had made a rapid growth during the past year in both membership and interest, and a successful warfare had been waged against a number of unlicensed quacks of the lower order. Their principal work, however, had been along the old routine lines, and no serious discussion ever had been had of the vast practical problems confronting the profession at every turn. They were fairly harmonious and very prosperous, and had not been alarmed by the rapid gains being made by the old as well as the almost endless new forms of quackery. And Los Angeles is a veritable paradise for quacks. Chiropractics, neuropractics, vitopaths, neuropaths, and others not classified, in addition to the common varieties with which we are all so familiar, were extensively and expensively exploited in open defiance of law and decency, all claiming, of course, not to be physicians. These combined interests appeared to have a controlling influence over the public press, and are likely to exercise a like power over legislatures and courts within the next few years unless all of the friends of scientific medicine can be united in an intelligent, systematic, comprehensive opposition. Pasadena has an excellent branch of the Los Angeles county society, and we organized a similar one with a promising future at Long Beach.

San Diego is entitled to a chapter of its own. In this beautiful, semi-tropical city, so favored by nature and human enterprise, the profession had been engaged in an internecine, personal and factional war for years, which had brought it into great public re-

proach. Some of the leading physicians had been kept out of all society relations in spite of the best efforts of the councilor and others, until the strife had come to be looked upon as chronic and almost hopeless. Declining to hear anything of the origin or history of their troubles, and having all of the factions present at the meeting, I frankly told them of the disgrace which doctors had brought upon themselves in all of the ages by causeless, senseless bickerings, how these things had consumed energies and barred progress, showed them how all had been equally to blame, but equally held in public contempt for these conditions, and then, without ever referring to their local affairs, I tried to convince them that harmony and cooperation were more important in ours than in any other vocation, and that there were at least ten reasons in favor of these pleasant and profitable relations where there was one for discord. In conclusion, I urged that if dissensions existed there a general clasping of hands, without apologies or explanations, and an individual resolution to try to do better in the future would settle everything. In less time than it has taken to tell this story there was a general and joyous handshaking going on until it embraced every one who had been in discord, and it was tacitly agreed to take every one into the society and unite in efforts to make it one of the best in the state. Dr. Jones and I remained over for a day to join in a boat ride down the bay, which the local profession insisted upon as a ratification of the era of good feeling upon which they were all so rejoiced to enter.

I feel that the foregoing is a very imperfect and restricted description of local society conditions in California. I have described things as I saw them, but am convinced that what I have said gives a very inadequate conception of this great profession as a whole. For they have a great profession. Individually they are strong. Socially they are delightful. They are more prosperous financially than in any other section I have visited. But they are weak just where they need to be strong—in their county societies. In consequence, there has been little cohesion or unity of purpose, there has been no systematic or well-directed effort to secure the cooperation of the press and other educational agencies in creating and guiding public opinion in regard to medical and public health affairs, or to concentrate the influence of the profession itself upon proper legislation.

A system of local societies, composed of and uniting all of the reputable physicians in each county, meeting at short intervals and alive to, and in touch with, every proper and available power for good in their respective jurisdictions, are the only agencies through which these things can be done. In California better than in almost any other state all of the other machinery is about complete. They have a strong State Society, and an able and fearlessly edited journal. It is the only state in the Union except Alabama, which has a secretary who can devote his entire time to this work. Dr. Jones deserves, and to a remarkable degree has, the profession solidly enlisted in his support. Their legislation is in a bad shape. They especially need a blanket provision in their medical law, like the one we have in Kentucky, which requires every one practicing the healing art under systems now in existence, or which may hereafter be discovered, to take a fair and impartial examination. There are many other things to be done, but this should receive early attention. They have little legislative influence at present, and there is danger from adverse efforts from the combined quack interests at the next session of their General Assembly, but with such a profession and such an able and unselfish leader, and with such a system of local societies, as I have urged, it can and should soon be the banner state of the Union in medical organization, including model medical legislation.

A GREAT WORK. WHAT A COUNTY SOCIETY MAY DO.

The following letter from one of the leading surgeons of Indiana contains so much of interest to county societies, indicating what may be done in any section where as many as three or four wide-awake men can be gotten together, that we are glad to put it before the profession. "What one man has done, other men can do."

Valparaiso, Ind.,
December 21, 1905.

DR. J. N. McCORMACK,
Chairman Committee on Organization,
Bowling Green, Ky.

Dear Doctor:

Your letter asking me to elaborate our plan of Post Graduate work here, with the view that such an account may be used in inducing other medical societies to do likewise has been received.

I am greatly pleased to have the privilege to do this, not only for your personal gratification, but for the reason that I am confident that it will redound to the very great benefit of such societies as deem it wise to adopt our plan, as well as to the individual members. It will enable them to do better and more efficient work for the public as a whole, and aid each individual physician in rendering the best possible service to the unfortunate sick.

Our work was begun two years ago by getting every physician interested in becoming more familiar with scientific and practical knowledge which would be an advantage to him at the bedside, and which would broaden him as a physician. With this end in view, we rented a room, formed a club, and endeavored in every way to appeal to and build up the social, scientific, and material spirit and welfare of the profession. From every point of view I desire to report that we have been eminently successful.

In carrying out this plan we divided our work in such a way that each physician was required to act as a teacher of some special subject, and all the others took their places as students once more. Anatomy and Surgery were assigned to one, Physiology and Practice to another, and so on through the list of subjects, one fundamental and one practical branch to each teacher. Our meetings were held twice a week, regular lessons were assigned, and we were expected to be present and give one hour's time to the recitation and study of such subjects as were assigned to that evening. In this way we were enabled not only to exchange individual views as to what we believed, but could always have some good medical authority to place us right if it were found that we were wrong. This plan proved very desirable and we soon learned that the teacher of the topic derived far greater benefit from his course, for the reason that he was required to study more to hold his ground, often against the combined opinion of his class.

After going along in this way for a time it became apparent that our faculty should be changed from time to time, in order that the teachers should become proficient in more than one subject. I desire to report to you that we found this most satisfactory, and that it has resulted in a marked improvement in the attainments of every member of our profession, which means of course of the profession as a whole.

The social feature of our plan has done as much, if not more, for the good of the profession, as the scientific work. I am now able to say that we have no one in this county not on the most friendly terms with each other, and that such condition is because they actually desire to be friendly.

In addition we have kept up our regular society meetings, always with increased interest, and although ours is not one of the large counties I feel safe in saying that we have one of the best, if not